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1969-09-26

## Memorandum concerning Black Students' Demands

J. Kenneth Blackwell

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Recd. 10-6-69

MEMORANDUM

To: Administration and Faculty  
Re: Black Students' Demands  
From: John K. Blackwell, President of A.A.A.  
Date: September 26, 1969

In this envelope you will find a list of demands presented by the Afro-American Association to the Administration during a meeting in the spring. Action on these demands has been slow due to a mutual misunderstanding by the Administration and the Afro-American Association.

Now that the atmosphere surrounding these demands is clearer, the Black students at Xavier University expect immediate action to be taken. The A.A.A. feels that it is insidious to formulate a time-table for these demands to be met, but we will not stand still for tokenism or foolish excuses for slow action.

Also, included in this envelope is a quote from part of my speech given during Freshmen Orientation on Sunday, September 21, 1969, in the Xavier Fieldhouse. With the quote are some explanations concerning the demands which I thought might give you a better understanding of the feelings of the Black students on campus.

Let me end by saying that we, as Black students, are fully aware that the country's campuses are faced with revolution and we do not plan to sleep through it. We are awakening the University and asking you to change for the good of the University Community.



1ST DEMAND - More black bodies in the form of:

- A. Students - At the present time there are more black kitchen help and janitors than full-time black students in Day College. To add to our black student population, we propose that a twenty thousand dollar scholarship fund be set up. This \$20,000 will be set aside from the Walsh Fund. It will be used to bring in twenty top black students who have top notch leadership ability. These students will be chosen by a black scholarship committee. The committee will be made up of (3) black students from the A.A.A., the present scholarship committee, and a black administrator.
- B. Professors and Graduate Assistants - These professors are needed to expose black and white students to intelligent black educators and to set the stereotype of black people straight. These professors are brought in on: 1) exchange programs to combat the draining of black southern schools; 2) an all-out recruitment program to be run by a special Black Professor Program Committee. This Committee will go after top black graduating students majoring in such things as history, sociology, philosophy, and psychology to develop a black graduate assistant program. These assistants will be instrumental to our proposed Black Study Program. The committee that screens these graduate assistants and professors will be made up of (3) students from the A.A.A. and a black administrator along with the present committee. We suggest that this program be put into effect by September, 1969.

2ND DEMAND - Development of a Department of Black Studies (and Community Relations) with the director of this department picked by the A.A.A. and approved by the Black Professor Program Committee. This department will have a community relations man and (3) paid part-time student workers to work in the community. All courses in this Black Studies Program will be relevant to people living in the black community and those planning to work in this same community. Free community enrichment courses will also be included in this program. This Black Studies Program will be devised by the A.A.A. along with an advisory committee made up of prominent black people of the community, professors, and Dean Henderson. This program should be started June, 1969.



## Some Reasons Behind the Demands

by John K. Blackwell

We feel that the majority of questions asked will be about, 1) our insistence that Black professors teach the courses under the Black Studies Program, and, 2) our reasoning behind the total program.

We state that it is important that Black professors teach these subjects that concern Black people in order to combat the racist ideology that exists in this University community and the surrounding society. The White professor, no matter what his credentials or how hip his ideas are, is inadequate to teach a course about Black people at the present time. His inadequacy lies in his unfortunate up-bringing in a racist society; therefore, consciously or unconsciously the majority of White professors will present a racist presentation of the material that needs to be covered. We feel that this is the case nine times out of ten. We acknowledge that there is a small percentage of Whites that have shaken off the influence of this society, but we feel that the time is not right for these men to be incorporated into our Black Studies Program. We do feel that it would be to the University's advantage to employ this caliber of man somewhere on its faculty.

It is necessary to understand that the Black experience in this country is unique from any other people's in this country. The White professor at best has only a minimum of knowledge on Black subjects because he lacks the experience needed to teach these subjects well.

We find that the atmosphere of learning is clearer if Black people are the educators in subjects concerning the lives of Black people. Our reasoning can be seen, perhaps, a little clearer in the following example: if a member of the Catholic Church wants to find out the history behind some of the customs of the Church, and the reasoning behind some of the interpretations of the Church, who should he consult? A Catholic priest, or a Jewish rabbi? He would consult the priest, of course, although the Rabbi may have a great deal of knowledge on the history and beliefs of the Catholic Church, the Priest is living them. This is why we demand that professors of our proposed Black Studies Program be Black.

Admittedly, this is not looking at the problem from a purely academic point of view, but the need for a psychological up-liftment is met when a Black professor teaches courses in Black Studies. From past experiences we know that the psychological needs of security, self-worth, and identification are met more adequately when you are being taught of yourself by someone who has undergone the same experience as you. This will also help the White students in the course in that they get a Black interpretation of the subject being taught.



To the critics of the Department of Black Studies who say it is ridiculous to segregate these subjects from the present curriculum, we say -- take a look at your present curriculum and see who's history, religion, economics, philosophy and literature we are studying. Then make your comments on segregation. We are not dividing ourselves from the University, but we are adding something new to this liberal educational institution.

We are asking the University to do something about the institutionalized racism that exists in its structure and we are demanding total educational freedom. Consequently, if you are denouncing racism, as you say you are, you will totally commit yourself to our war against educational oppression. You must begin to show evidence of good will through action.

This, perhaps, is the most dramatic challenge that has faced this University in its years of existence. It has come to the time for you to show us that reasonable negotiations can bring about progress equal to that brought on by chaos. We feel it is necessary to remember that it is the oppressors action that determines the action or methods used by the oppressed to obtain their freedom.

The calm and moderate voice which has dominated our group for the past two years is quickly fading away. It is being replaced with one of bitterness and frustration. This change in the Black voice on campus has been building up over a long period of time.

Most of us came to this University to escape the physical oppression of the Ghetto and have since encountered a bigger monster -- psychological oppression. We since have dedicated and committed our lives to fighting this monster that is designed to keep us slaves and keep our communities as prisons. You, the University Administration and Faculty, can help us overcome this monster by granting us these two humane demands.

#### Relating to the Community

Xavier University lies in a predominately Black society. Thus, we raise the question, what has Xavier contributed to the improvement of life in the communities that surround it?

When the University accepts its responsibility to the communities it will then, and only then, begin to serve a legitimate function. Xavier must cease being the paternalistic 'Great White Father' and start to consult with the people to find out how Xavier can relate to the problems of the community.



As an institution of learning, Xavier must educate the community in things that are relivant to that community's survival.

Presently there is a non-existent relationship between the University and the Black community. This is the reason there exists a need for an office of Community Relations to be established. There must be community -- university communication.

For example, we propose that the University integrate into the neighborhood and set up classes concerning such things as consumer education, general courses in business management, and income tax filing. In these classes (classes offering self-fulfillment to the people of the community) the material taught must be related to what really is. This education has to be realted to the conditions and asperations of the community.

The present view of Xavier University in the community is negative. Xavier is viewed as an institution of racist education, where Whites come to learn and upon graduating begin to exploit the very same people who's community they were taught in.

In ending, we raise these questions:

Are you willing to change this image?

Do you care?

When will you act?



Quotes from  
John K. Blackwell's speech given during  
Freshman Orientation on  
Sunday, September 21, 1969

"To start, let me say I didn't come here to impress you but to inform you of the changing perspectives of the Black Students at Xavier University. The Black Students at Xavier have finally come to the realization that they have something far more important to do than play the role of the perfect Negro. Most of us no longer overworship White Society and are not anxious to imitate it. We are trying to escape total emersion into White values that we perceive to be materialistic, immoral, and racist. So, as you can see, we, as Black people, are undergoing a dramatic transformation. We can call this process Black Resocialization.

That is to say, we, as Black Students, are creating a new conscienciousness of Self and an awareness of our role in the Black Revolution. From this new awareness we realize that we have definite ties and commitments to our communities and the people of those communities. We no longer want to obtain a college degree as a means to escape the Black community. If we continue to play this game, our Black communities will become more and more oppressed.

The Black Students here on campus are aware that to learn what the White boys learn is to learn how to support and administer to policital structure and economic system that oppress and suppress Black people. So we are determined to struggle to fit our education more closely to our own situation. We no longer want a "White" education. By this I mean that White people have the power to define education because they control the society in which we live. Thus, if Black people continue to go by these definitions, we will not be able to move from this area of prescription set by White Americans. Let me explain something very important to you -- the institution of education in America is the major socializing agency which induces people to accept and participate in this established social arrangement. We, as Black people, hold this education to be racist and a supporter of Black oppression.

You must understand this. In order to maintain oppression with stability it is necessary for the system to make those who are educated by the system into its own image. This is what we refuse to let happen here at Xavier. It is this that we are rebelling against. For, you see, Xavier is a part of this same educational system and it is doing its share of miseducating and of omitting the knowledge which is important to all of us as students, Black and White."